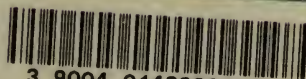


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CARE OF OUR

DESTITUTE AND CRIMINAL
POPULATION;

A SERIES OF LETTERS PUBLISHED IN THE
"MONTREAL GAZETTE,"

BY

"PHILANTHROPY."

passed.

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CARE OF OUR DESTITUTE AND CRIMINAL POPULATION.

LETTER I.

To the Editor of the Montreal Gazette.

Sir,—Believing that the present is a favorable time to urge upon the consideration of both the Government and people of the Province the claims of a class of unfortunates who can neither plead for themselves nor understand the wretchedness of their condition, I shall beg for a little space in your columns, to act the part of an advocate for them, and will be greatly mistaken if sufficient philanthropy is not found in this city and province, or of justice and wisdom in the Government, to recognize the claim and ameliorate the condition of those to whom I refer.

The class, sir, whose case I would bring before the public, consists not only of juvenile offenders, but embraces non-offending juveniles as well. It comprises young persons of both sexes who have entered upon a life of crime, and children of every age, who, from the circumstances in which they are placed, must of necessity become criminals as soon as they are capable.

The case of Mrs. Turner and her four hapless children, who were sent to gaol a few days ago, though very erroneously reported in some of the city papers, stirred up the public sympathy in a very remarkable degree. But it is neither from erroneous statements, nor from temporary excitement founded upon a highly

colored painting of a case that sound and beneficial reforms can be expected to proceed ; and it is not a little remarkable that the sympathy created in favor of Mrs. Turner would seem to have expended itself already. True Mrs. Turner is proved to be, not the virtuous desiring person she had represented herself ; but can that fact weaken the claims of little Eliza, Samuel, Sarah, and Ann Turner, aged 10, 8, 5, and 3 years ? Does not that very fact become the strongest plea in favor of those unoffending little creatures ? If indeed the mother was sober and virtuous, wrestling against poverty, her children might often feel the pinching cold and the keen cravings of hunger ; but virtue would be instilled into them, and every year would see their troubles diminishing, till ere long they would all, if spared, be sure to eat the sweet and wholesome bread of their own industry. Leave those children under the tuition and care of this bad mother, and sad experience tells me what they must all become. Their state at this moment is indeed bad enough. Convicted and sent to gaol, to be kept at hard labour—placed in the unwholesome atmosphere of a crowded ward, and associated with depravity in its lowest state ; and all this ere they had been taught to know anything either of the laws of God or man ! Surely this is sending them to school with a vengeance—the school of vice. Will they not learn ? Yes, reader, they will learn. Experience knows they will, if they are not something more or less than human. At present they are sheltered from cold and hunger :—two months hence they will be upon the streets again, and the feelings that prompted the Police Magistrate to send them to gaol at first, will doubtless be called into exercise again, and thus matters will go on, the family meanwhile increasing in number, and sinking down into deeper depravity. Let us now anticipate the family history of the Turners by two or three years to come. The name will then be quite familiar to every reader of the Police reports, and the gaol will be

the only home on earth known to those unfortunate children. Time however will have done its work ; sympathy will not then dictate their commitment, and society will not be moved to pity them any more. Punitive justice will deal with them, and society will approve its necessary award, consigning to a long imprisonment the incorrigible pests. The wise man said, —“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Three years training by a depraved mother, with the gaol and its associations for a school-house, what will it not effect ? That little girl of ten years will, in three more, have practically joined the ranks of the abandoned. Little Samuel will be an expert young pick-pocket, and the other children will be pressing close upon their heels along the same downward path. Justice will look with unfeigned astonishment upon such precious depravity, while it punishes the young delinquents *for having learned the only lesson they were ever taught*. If the case of the little Turners was a solitary one, it would be no reason why society should not put forth the hand to save those poor little girls from a life of prostitution, and the boys from a felon’s fate. But alas ! this case, in all its features, is by no means a solitary one. The children of vagrants are growing up to a life of crime, and yet society looks on with folded arms. Occasionally a growl is heard against the mal-construction of our prison, and the absence of proper classification and discipline among its inmates, and for the moment every eye is turned to the gaol as the origin of all evil. Or, as in the present instance, the benevolence of society is appealed to, and the better feelings of our nature find vent in projecting plans for amelioration. But so long as the evil keeps a safe distance from the persons and properties of those who have influence, few will be found to take any further trouble about the matter, and so it falls to the ground. Both the remedy and the true cause of the disease are allowed to remain as before.

The treatment of juveniles is one of first importance and the state of our prisons physically as well as morally, in whatever light the subject may be viewed, can hardly be regarded as one of minor importance. But society must not be allowed to suppose that the whole of the evil is to be found in these, or can be cured in them. Bad laws, and the mal-administration of them, lie more nearly at the foundation of the evil than the casual observer would be likely to imagine. I shall, with your permission, devote my spare hours to these subjects, giving the result in your journal. In the mean time,

I have the honor be,

Your obedient servant,

PHILANTHROPY.

Montreal, 7th February, 1857.

LETTER II.

To the Editor of the Montreal Gazette.

Sir,—That there is scarcely any question which can occupy the public mind of greater importance to the best interests of society, and that there is not one which presents greater difficulties to the Legislature of this Province, than the enactment of laws for juvenile delinquents and the proper mode of treating this class of offenders or unfortunates, are statements that will appear greatly exaggerated to the vast majority even of persons of considerable intelligence, and yet I make them advisedly and with ample opportunities for observation and reflection. The truth of these statements has been felt in its full proportions where legislation has been brought to bear upon the question, and it is further confirmed by the acknowledged failures which have been the result in the majority of cases. Doubtless our

own Legislature have felt the difficulties of the case and have in consequence delayed to enact laws which it were better not to pass at all, than, having been passed, to prove not only a failure, but also an obstacle to further legislation. To the mere speculator and the theorist who hastily glance over annual reports, official returns, &c, little or no difficulty will appear—they could sit down and compile a few pithy extracts from such printed reports and essays, and in a few hours give a perfect recipe for juvenile delinquency and its treatment with as much confidence as quack medicines are puffed in the public newspapers, and with about as much real knowledge of the disease, and chance of success in one case as in the other. I feel that I cannot too earnestly insist upon the difficulty that surrounds this subject, and more especially in a community like our own, made up as it is of persons professing different creeds, speaking different languages, and claiming different national descent. Every one of these separate, and in some degree rival distinctions, may become powerful to throw obstacles in the way of legislation on this subject, while not one of them can be of any practical use or be so much as recognised in working out a well digested and comprehensive law for the juvenile. On this point, however, I shall speak more fully hereafter. In the mean time I would lay it down as a proposition that the Legislature, and the Legislature alone, must assume the responsibility both of framing laws and superintending their execution for the treatment and prevention of juvenile delinquency. But before the correctness of this proposition can be established it will be necessary that we somewhat carefully examine the main question, viz. juvenile delinquency as it exists in this district, together with its causes and consequences.

The loud alarm rung by the press, when Mrs. Turner and her four little children were sent to gaol, and the excitement it caused among the more chari-

table and intelligent portion of the community, would seem to indicate that instances of what I shall denominate wholesale family commitments, are supposed to be of very rare occurrence. Such, however, is not the fact; the Turners' is the eighth commitment of this kind since the commencement of the year—the number of the family of course was not the same in every case, but all consisted of two or more children. And by the term children I do not mean babes upon the breast—this would swell the list fearfully—I mean those only who have arrived at such a degree of maturity as to be susceptible of external influences for good or evil. Juvenile delinquency, however, is a term much too comprehensive to be restricted to cases of this nature; children of this class receive much of their education in gaol; but there is another class who have made great proficiency before they are brought to gaol for the first time. *But before leaving the prison let me state that there are at this moment, sheltered and fed within its walls, no less than twenty children of fourteen years and under. Nearly all of these have one or both parents with them, but some have none, and are friendless and alone in the world.* During eleven and a half months of this year, one hundred and eighty-three commitments have been fyled in the gaol, consigning to that “den of vice” as it is not inaptly called, a like number of young people of both sexes of seventeen years and under. Many of these have been committed several times already, and are entered on the books of the gaol as “old offenders.” Girls of twelve years and upwards have already become unblushing prostitutes, and boys of eleven are already expert thieves. How sad! How sickening is the thought, that there are now in this city more than one hundred young persons for whom courts and prisons have lost all their terrors, and to whom a sentence of imprisonment in the gaol, or even in the penitentiary, appears in no worse light than a temporary interruption in the pursuit of their ordinary avo-

cations ! But, with many of them, even this restraint is not felt, young as they are, and without another home. The prison is an indispensable retreat. In it medical attendance, with proper care and comfort, cost nothing, and the tedium of confinement is more than compensated by the society of others of like character, the recital of whose lives and adventures enlivens the scene, lends a charm to crime, and stifles the voice of conscience which, in the absence of such companions, would assert its power and make its voice heard. Now, this cannot be too strongly impressed upon the public mind, *that imprisonment under existing circumstances is not regarded by the juvenile who has commenced a vicious course as a punishment*, and especially when the term of imprisonment is limited to a few weeks or months. In some cases as already stated, such a sentence is desirable, and in the others, at most, it is felt as an inconvenience. But this is a digression.

Having shewn that nearly two hundred commitments of juveniles took place during the year, or about one-ninth of the whole number of prisoners for the same period, the casual reader will be apt to imagine that he has seen the full extent of the evil and its causes too ; and he naturally exclaims—the gaol is indeed a “den of vice,” a very hot-bed of iniquity. He will cry out, improve the prison and place its inmates under proper classification and discipline, and it will be well. The gaol is indeed a sink of evil, but what else can it be ? Has it not been built designedly to be the receptacle of the depraved ? Does not every polluted streamlet in the district discharge its foul droppings into it ? And if this were not enough, have not the sweepings of the poor houses in Ireland been cast into it ? Will fermentation be checked by collecting the damp grain into a large heap ? Will it not rather proceed with greater rapidity ? In such circumstances, will not a little leaven leaven the whole lump ? Will not the depraved emigrant, who has figured before

the Courts of Justice in Europe, and left a record of his deeds upon the prison calendar there, pass for a sort of hero among homely thieves and prostitutes? And will not the lessons of the gaol become more varied, and crimes not before attempted be introduced by such adventurers? As an illustration of this, I would ask, have not new crimes sprung up and fearfully increased of late, that were at one time hardly known in Canada—incendiarism for instance? And might not the prostitutes of this city, twenty years ago, be regarded as modest, when compared with the abandoned street-walker of the present day?

I would close this letter by urging the improvement of the prison and discipline at any cost. But if we stop here, we would be merely pouring water on the smoke, while the fire that caused it continued to rage unchecked. The evil must be reached at its source; the noxious weed must be nipped in the bud; the child must be separated from parents who would only train it up to vice. As we pull down a worthless shed or stable to stay the conflagration, so must the family tie, sacred though it be, be snapped asunder when it becomes manifest that it could only be tolerated for evil to all concerned. Society must act on the defensive, and in protecting itself against juvenile delinquents under a well digested system, none will feel the benefit or profit so much by its operation as juvenile delinquents themselves.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

PHILANTHROPY.

Montreal, March 17th, 1857.

LETTER III.

To the Editor of the Montreal Gazette.

Sir,—The proposition with which I closed my last letter, will doubtless appear a little startling to many. To snap asunder the parental tie, undo the law of nature, and I may add the law of God ;—say to the parent your authority over the child shall cease ; and to the child, you shall cease to honor and obey your parent, are words of indeed solemn import. And to carry out the proposition would be to incur very serious responsibility. It therefore becomes those who would suggest such a course, and those who are called upon to adopt it to weigh the matter well. Can expediency require, or can such a necessity arise as would justify such an exercise of power ? When I glance from this sheet at that romping little flock with their happy faces, my feelings revolt against the base idea of any power on earth presuming to stand between me and my children, and deprive me of one of God's choicest blessings. And when I reflect that in the rudest hovel, as much as in the lordly mansion, such a separation as the one under consideration, would be regarded as the greatest of earthly calamities, I feel, assuming that separation is justifiable, and even necessary, it should not be lightly made. Society should have the best guarantee that such power should be entrusted only to hands that would use it with prudence. But I return to examine whether there be such a necessity as would justify, and even demand the exercise of such power. Let us follow Mrs. Turner and her four hapless children to the gaol, and look at another family picture—but how different. There, in that long room, you can count no less than ten children of all ages, from ten years down to eight months. They are all with their mother under the same circumstances as the little Turners. The history of one is substantially the history of them all ;

the gaol is their home, and the city is their begging ground. From one to two months makes up their average stay in the gaol at one time, and the interval of their absence from it seldom exceeds a few days in winter, and as many weeks in summer. What a care-worn anxious expression—the unmistakable evidence of hardship—sits already upon some of their young faces, where mirth and health should beam. Poor little creatures, their lot is hard indeed. Treated as criminals before they can discern evil from good, and without any act or will of their own, locked up in a prison, surrounded by its demoralizing associations, there to receive first lessons and to have impressions made upon memory which will not be effaced through life. Will the gaol, or the sentence of the Judge, have any terrors for children who have been prisoners ever since they can remember, and who have found more of the comforts of life in the prison than any where else? Will vice even in its lowest and most revolting aspect, create any alarm in the minds of children whose ears have been familiarized with the filthy conversation of the most depraved while in prison, and whose eyes have witnessed the licentious conduct of their own mothers when out of prison? Reader, I am not drawing a picture, I am writing facts. I am writing from knowledge, but decency must check words. The facts that may not be stated, but which must be left to the imagination, would appear incredible to many. It is right, however, I should state that instances are not rare of daughters who have been trained up in the manner I am now describing, viz. from gaol to the streets with their mothers, who have become prostitutes at the age of twelve or thirteen. And I have a painful apprehension upon my mind, that such will be the fate of the little girls now in gaol with their mothers if they are allowed to remain with them. Reader, let me now introduce you to a poor young creature, whose brief history is full to my purpose. In that bed in the same long room, lies

one of those poor victims of neglect and prison companionship. That poor wasted form was a pretty little girl when I saw her first, about three years ago. She then came to the gaol to visit the McG——family, a mother and her daughters, who were frequent inmates of the gaol. She was not suffered to see them ; but in a very little while after, she was committed to gaol with this family, and has been but little out of it ever since. Now let her own tongue tell her tale :—“ My father died while I was very young, and my mother got married again when I was about eight years of age. I was not kept at school, but allowed to run about and ask for coppers in the streets. I got acquainted with other little girls who did the same ; they were Mrs. McG ——’s daughters ; they were often sent to gaol with their mother. I went to see them, but was not allowed. About three years ago my mother took a fever and was sent to the hospital ; my step-father, who had never been kind to me, now left me and went to a boarding house, and as I had no friend to stay with, I got myself committed to gaol with the McG ——’s, and before I came out my mother died and I had no friend in the world, so I stuck to the McG ——’s and I have been a great many times in gaol since then. We used to beg when we came out of gaol, but for the last year I have been doing worse. It was the McG ——girls that led me into it, (prostitution) but I had no other way of living.”

Such is the history of little Mary H——n, aged sixteen years. Now, who is to blame for all this ? Has this child most sinned, or been most sinned against ? Has society performed its part to her ? Would any father in the whole community desire that his daughter should be so dealt with ? Well then, we have not done our duty. Reader, you doubtless feel for the hard fate of this poor young outcast. You may drop a tear when you read this short story. Yes, you would unloose the purse string and feel that money would be well spent

in snatching such an one from destruction; but ah, it is too late. Money cannot help her now—death has marked her out for his prey, and the virtue she has forfeited cannot be brought back. We are powerless to repair what we might have prevented. Not so with little Sarah and Mary Ann Turner; they are still within our reach. Two or three years and they will have passed beyond it forever; that insatiable demon (lust) will have seized upon them, and have dragged them into that fearful gulf that has swallowed up so many—oh! how many of the loveliest of our race. Christians, citizens, rulers, I would call upon you for help. Put forth the hand even now, and do what may be done to arrest juvenile delinquency. Do you ask for further evidence to prove the necessity of prompt action in this matter, and to justify the taking of children from bad parents who would only train them up to evil? Well here it is. I shall not select, but take the first case that comes to hand; it is the family referred to—the McG's. This family appear upon the gaol calendar for the last four or five years; the daughters were mere children when first committed, but they have made rapid progress in learning what they were taught. In November 1854 Jane was 12 years of age, but she was already a bold and hardened prostitute; a sentence of two months was mere pass-time to her. She therefore adds theft to her other accomplishments, and was convicted of her first larceny on the 9th of January, 1855, and sentenced to four months in the House of Correction. Her sister Mary is two years older than this girl, and though she has not been detected in any felony as yet, she has been a public prostitute since she was twelve years of age. Unlike the first poor orphan who was led to destruction by these bad girls, they have a mother, and mother and girls go together in their abandoned career.

Cases of this kind might be multiplied, but for the present these must suffice. My object is not to write the history of the gaol, but to demonstrate that a state

of things does exist, and to an extent not only to justify, but to render the separation of children from their parents a bounden duty. Where, it will be asked, shall such a work begin? I answer, it must begin with the people. The Legislature must work the matter into shape, and the Executive Government must assume the responsibility of carrying out the law, when once it shall have passed. But society must rise up and ask for the measure which shall deal with juvenile delinquency, as well for its prevention as for its cure.

Thousands of pounds can be raised to celebrate the opening of a piece of road, and prodigally expended in rich feasts for the affluent, who never knew what it was to want a single meal. And tens of thousands can be raised to erect colleges, where the sons of the wealthy may receive the finishing touch and polish to make them shine through life. And hundreds of thousands are annually spent in keeping up prisons and penitentiaries, and in maintaining the costly machinery of criminal justice. But, save the Marsteller bequest, no hand has been as yet stretched in the direction of the class for whom I write. Doubtless there have been large sums spent every winter in what is called charity, by the different churches; and temporary relief in the shape of food, clothing and fuel, has been liberally dispensed; but so far from this effecting any permanent good, it has fostered the very evil I am considering. Now the project I advocate, if carried out judiciously, will not add to the burdens of either Church or State; but it will bring hundreds who would never darken a church-door within the reach of its instruction; it will save the public purse thousands annually; and, what is infinitely more, it may save hundreds of young persons of both sexes from guilt and misery in this life, and from eternal misery in that which is to come.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

PHILANTHROPY.

Montreal, Feb. 25, 1857.

LETTER IV.

To the Editor of the Montreal Gazette.

Sir,—It will gratify many of your readers to know that since the publication of my last letter, the Ladies of the Benevolent Society have through the agency of Mr. Carson, City Missionary, received Eliza, Samuel, and Sarah Jane Turner into their noble institution. What intense delight does the mind experience, (as we read such statements as sometimes meet the eye,) when a child is saved from the very jaws of death—taken from the window of a burning room just as the devouring element was about to swallow it up. Well here are three little children plucked as brands from the burning; and, oh! what a burning! How little can they realize its horrors of loathsomeness and misery, who have never been placed in a position to contemplate the darkest shades of human depravity, as exhibited among congregated masses of profligate men and women. Could I ever have conceived what the experience of more than sixteen years has made so amazingly familiar to my mind, if I had not actually witnessed it? What arithmetic can sum up the good which this one act may be the means of accomplishing; or the fearful amount of wretchedness and guilt it has averted from these children and from society by this well-timed act? But if there be one sordid soul who could stand unmoved by considerations such as these, I can still approach such an one with arguments which even he can comprehend. And I would ask such an one, to look at the vast annual expenditure of the public funds for the administration of criminal justice—the effect of all which is acknowledged to be, that the criminals grow worse and worse—and then let him calculate if he can the vast amount that will be saved to the revenues of the Province by transferring these three children from prison to the Benevolent Institution. So much, then,

for what has been or may be done by individual benevolence, or by charitable associations, without legislation. To all who have not made the difficulties of the subject a matter of special reflection, it may appear that we already possess all the requisites, if we only have the will to put an end to juvenile delinquency. Hence we find the warm, generous impulses of our nature manifesting their power, in plans and projects which, however erroneous in principle, and inadequate for the accomplishment aimed at, nevertheless prove that the necessity for making prompt exertions to turn the fearful tide of juvenile delinquency into the channels of virtue and industry, is strongly pressing itself upon the public mind. I shall briefly notice one of these projects which is partly before the public, to show how much reflection is needed upon this very important subject. A correspondent writing in the *Gazette* of the 8th inst. calls my attention to the columns of the *Montreal Witness*, in which he says "it will be found that an offer was made by one of our citizens to be one of thirty who would give a hundred pounds towards the erection of a Protestant Juvenile Reformatory and House of Refuge, and to be one of six to take, if required, an active management in its affairs." This juvenile project is brought forward by your correspondent both to disprove my statement, that "save the Marsteller bequest, no hand has as yet been stretched forth in the direction of this class for whom I write," and also to test the justice of my title to the signature over which I write, by challenging me to subscribe a hundred pounds towards the erection of the proposed Reformatory. Let me say to your correspondent, that there is some little difference between making an offer to do a thing, and doing it; but, if the thing proposed by him was actually done, it would hardly affect the correctness of my statement. The class for whom I write is neither Protestant nor Catholic. No, poor things, they know little about either, except the name; and it is to

be feared that their parents are scarcely better off in this respect. But if it were otherwise, "Philanthropy" has yet to learn whether there is one whit more of merit, or less of duty, in trying to save from a life of untold misery and guilt, a poor little boy or girl, because the father or grand-father is called a Protestant, than if he had been a Hottentot. If that be Protestantism which would limit its efforts to rescue juveniles from the paths and influences leading to the felon's dock or to the brothel, to children who could pronounce some sectarian shibboleth, then I should tremble before Him who "hath made of one blood all nations of men," if I did not in my heart protest against it. The bare recognition of the claim, deliberately giving themselves up to a profligate life, to rank among nominal professions, goes to encourage them in their downward course. What an idea!—*A protestant prostitute!* or, *a Catholic Mistress of a Brothel!* Will the pestiferous influence of the wretched prostitute be less hurtful to society, because, forsooth, her father or mother had been a few times to church during a long life-time; or, will it compensate the citizen, that the pick-pocket who abstracted his purse, calls himself a Protestant? Let me however take higher ground, and ask what part of the Divine Record directs us to limit our charitable endeavors to children whose parents make some sort of profession? Now for the challenges. Your correspondent has doubtless read the parable of the poor widow. Well, sir, I am too poor, and have so many juveniles of my own to provide for, that I must beg to decline the challenge, together with the fame of being ennobled and glorified in the columns of a public newspaper for the munificent subscription, &c. But I do not repine that I have not hundreds to give away at once, and especially in the present instance; believing, as I do, that the scheme proposed is essentially defective. The Ladies Benevolent Institution is in every respect adequate to the performance of all that may be accomplished without Le-

gislation. Better send the promised hundreds to the ladies whose unwearied attention and long experience give them high superiority over any similar institution lacking such experience, than to start a rival, entailing heavy preliminary outlays.

Let me now return to my starting point. The public will doubtless be anxious to learn what has become of Mrs. Turner's fourth child. Has she died in the gaol, or would the ladies not receive her? Not so, reader. Little Annie is quite well, and the ladies would willingly receive her with the others; but this bad mother positively refused to part with her, and the ladies have no alternative. The absence of such a law as that for which I am contending, allows the caprice of a profligate mother to triumph over the benevolent efforts made to save this little girl from the path of vice, and the unknown horrors of a life of prostitution. Poor little Annie, what a fearful penalty you are doomed to pay for being "mammy's pet"! Now let me ask—what could "six active managers of a Protestant Juvenile Reformatory and House of Refuge" do for this child, or for any child similarly circumstanced? Could they force little Annie from her mother? Or, if in the Reformatory, could they legally prevent the mother from taking her away whenever she pleased? Is it not therefore manifest, that the Reformatory could only exist by the consent of such parents as Mrs. Turner? Let me therefore intreat "one of the thirty," and every true philanthropist, irrespective of creed or sect, to turn his influence in the right direction—begin the house at the foundation. First obtain the enactment of laws that will authorise the taking away from bad parents, children who could only grow up under their evil example, to become pests to society, in order that they may be trained up to industry and virtue. Let a public meeting be called, to sanction a petition to the different branches of the Legislature, praying for the enactment of necessary laws, and for the founding of

an institution into which children may be placed by competent authority without the distinction of race or creed. Let the maintenance and supervision of this institution rest with the Government as the common parent of all ; and let the different teachers of religion have free access to the children belonging to the different creeds ; and then the Juvenile Reformatory, armed with full power, will possess adequate means, without waiting till the boy or girl has been contaminated or branded with crime. Nip the evil in the bud—not with a partial or palsied hand. For such an institution society would have cause to be thankful, and the Government, in it, will have raised to their lasting honor, a monument of which Canada would have cause to be proud. Children will not then be doomed to the education of the prison and the brothel, but will receive from society the attention and kindness which profligate parents deny them.

In my next letter, I shall endeavour to define the limits within which the law I am contending for should be circumscribed ; and I shall further demonstrate that without Legislation, anything deserving the name of a Juvenile Reformatory is an impossibility.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

PHILANTHROPY.

Montreal, January 17, 1857.

LETTER V.

To the Editor of the Montreal Gazette.

Sir—The Court of Quarter Sessions, which has just closed its sittings, furnished many strong arguments in favor of a Juvenile Reformatory ; and doubtless the presiding judge keenly felt the need of such an institu-

tion, as one after another—scarcely tall enough to shew their heads above the dock—rose to receive sentence. Some had deserted their homes to get rid of parental restraint ; some had lost one or both of their parents, and the parents of others were either in the gaol or the penitentiary. Each one had a history peculiar to himself, but there was one point which was common to them all, viz—left to themselves they had all by a longer or shorter course, met together in the felon's dock ; and young as they were, with most of them it was not the first time. But the difficulty was, how to dispose of them. They had already been punished with a few months in the gaol, and admonished that if they ever returned again, they would receive a more severe sentence. To send them to the penitentiary for a period of two years, would scarcely be an improvement upon sending them to the gaol. They would come out again with a still stronger impression of their degradation upon their minds, and before they had acquired moral habits, or a sufficient knowledge of any business by which they could honestly maintain themselves. But if the sentence was increased, so as to give time for reformation and the acquirement of some industrial art, such a sentence would be manifestly disproportioned to the offence, and would stand in striking contrast with the sentence of older offenders. What a load would be removed from the mind of the Judge in such circumstances, if it were in his power to send these little pests to an institution that would at once protect society against their depredations, detach them from their evil companions and from careless or vicious parents ; that would keep them under proper restraint and impart to them moral and industrial training ; and so enable them to become useful members of society. Is there a Judge in either section of the Province, who ever presided at Criminal Courts, who would not regard such an institution as an inestimable boon ? Is there a gaoler or superintendent of a House of Correc-

tion in Canada, who has the heart of a parent in his bosom, who would not rejoice that a step had at length been taken in the right direction? Enough has been advanced to demonstrate the necessity of providing an institution for the reception and training of young persons of both sexes, who would otherwise grow up in habits of vice and crime; and also to prove that without Legislation, such an institution cannot exist. I shall therefore proceed to define the sphere within which legislation on this subject, to be beneficial to all concerned, should operate; conscious as I am, that the real difficulty of the question lies here. Few would be found to raise any objection against placing under the operation of a law for juveniles, all these little thieves who have figured before the late Court; and, as a general thing, I presume, the propriety of allowing such a law to include all children convicted of vagrancy as well as the children of vagrant parents, would be freely conceded. But will society as cheerfully allow such a law to take away children who have never been convicted from their parents? And will they as readily agree under what circumstances and to what extent such a power should be exercised? Every proprietor would justify the pulling down of a worthless shed or tenement, in order to cut off the communication, and save his own valuable dwelling from the devouring element. The owner of the worthless house might however have good reason to complain, that the act he was powerless to prevent was fraught with great injustice to him. Now, for the very reason that the class for whom I write have no voice in making our laws, must our law-makers be careful that the bounds of justice shall not be exceeded in their case. It is right to pull down a worthless fabric, when it becomes obvious that to allow it to stand longer would endanger property of great value, and perchance a whole city; but it would be manifestly unjust, to allow caprice or malice to pull

down the poor man's cot, because circumstances *might* arise in which danger would ensue.

We must not, however, forget that the upright and virtuous are not the only—and they are not even the chief—parties interested in the enactment of laws for the separation of children from their parents. The children themselves would be the chief gainers in every point of view. We do not, therefore, literally destroy the worthless shed to save the neighboring dwellings ; but we collect all that is valuable of its materials, and remove them to a place of safety, and so preserve them from inevitable destruction. Shall we receive the question whether it is most just and beneficial to the interests of all concerned, that we remove the materials before they have been discolored by the flames, or after they have been blackened by the smoke, and it may be deeply charred by the combustion ? Or, dropping figures and coming to facts. would it not have been more just and humane to have taken the young persons lately tried at the Bar (some of them a second, and even a third time,) on a charge of felony, placing them in a school of industry before they had plunged into crime, than to have delayed our efforts till after they had become hardened and deceitful by practising the lessons they had received, with every vestige of modesty and self-respect lost by being openly paraded before a Court of Justice, and having the brand of infamy authoritatively affixed upon their brow ? In a word, if we are to train up the children who have no parents, to habits of industry and virtue, shall we best achieve our object by taking them away from the evil influence before it has festered and broken out in some of the many forms of vice, lest after the moral ulcer has appeared, it be in an incurable form ? There is no room for a difference of opinion upon a question like this. “ Train up a child in the way he should go,” has the faithful promise appended—“ when he is old he will not depart from it.” Many, however, will promptly admit, that

it would be far better if all the children convicted before our Courts had been placed in some suitable institution before the crime had been committed, who would hesitate to apply a law for juveniles to some of these same children, before they had actually committed an offence. Now my own decided and mature reflections are, that a law for juveniles will be but half a measure if it does not provide for the separation of children from their parents before they have actually entered upon a course of crime. And I feel equally convinced, that in framing such a law, the Legislature must keep in view the character of parents, rather than that of children. Parents who will do their duty are vastly superior to any guardian who might be placed at the head of a house for juveniles; for besides being the divinely appointed instructors of their child, their hearts enter into the work in a manner that no stranger can successfully imitate. Good parents may, and often have, reclaimed a wayward child; but the instances are rare indeed of a child growing up to be a moral man or woman, whose parental instructions, by precept and example, have been the very opposite of virtuous. Besides clearing our Courts and prisons of all children under a certain age who shall be found in them when the law comes into operation, whether they have been convicted of any offence, or are there with parents who have been convicted as vagrants, keepers of houses of ill-fame, or of any other offence against good morals, they should be forthwith removed to a juvenile institution. The law must also deal promptly with juvenile mendicants. I mean, of course, children who are allowed to practise street-begging. Let the parents of every child found asking alms in the street, or from door to door, be admonished once or twice of the fact, and if after such warning the same child is found abroad begging, it will be manifest that such parents are either unable, or neglectful to restrain their children. In either case, the children of parents following an unlaw-

ful calling, such as keepers of gambling or tippling houses, brothels and houses of assignation, on satisfactory proof being made of the fact, by credible and disinterested witnesses, who would also declare their belief (founded upon facts to be stated) that children brought up under such circumstances, by such parents, would be exposed to evils, the natural tendency of which would only be to render them vicious and depraved—such children, surely, should not be denied the advantages of the institution. Orphans, whether of emigrants or others, who are left destitute, and also children deserted by their parents, should by all means be placed in the house for juveniles.

The operation of such a law in the hands of an upright, humane Judge or Judges would, I have no doubt, tend in a remarkable degree to diminish crime, not only by the number of young persons that it would remove from the path of vice, and the evil influences which must operate to make them criminals, but parents also would be constrained to act a very different part from that they do at present. Many thousands of pounds would be annually saved to the Province in the single item of administering criminal justice and the care and maintenance of criminals in gaol, &c. And what is infinitely more important than all, we should have the consciousness that we have tried to do our duty. The fruits of that effort would be apparent in the happy faces of scores of boys and girls growing up to a life of virtue and usefulness, who would otherwise be pests and plague-spots in society, poisoning the moral atmosphere around them, and sinking still deeper into guilt and degradation.

In conclusion, I would remark, that if it appear hard to separate children from their parents, while they remain by them, and maintain a roof over them, I ask, is it not much harder to allow such children to become actual criminals, and then be obliged to do the same thing with much less chance of success? I feel that

the exercise of such power should be placed in prudent hands, and jealously watched over, and might require to be guarded by the intervention of a jury fitly chosen. I would also remark, that such separation need not necessarily be final; on the contrary, parents might be allowed to reclaim their children, on furnishing a sufficient guarantee that they would bring them up properly. This would operate as a strong inducement to parents to abandon their vicious modes of living and try to do well.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

PHILANTHROPY.

Montreal, Feb. 25, 1857.

LETTER VI.

To the Editor of the Montreal Gazette.

Sir,—That without legislation a Juvenile Reformatory would be a nullity, is, I believe, pretty generally conceded by all who take an interest in such matters; and that an institution of this kind is absolutely required is not denied by any. Mere passive convictions, however, will not build a Reformatory, nor pass the needful enactments—frame the machinery and set the whole in motion; and until all these are done, our convictions can only convict ourselves of cold, cruel, heartless, and I may add, criminal neglect, without benefiting the poor forlorn juvenile who, while we are finding a kind of excuse for our narrow-minded selfishness in expressions of sympathy, is sinking deeper into the gulf of destruction, and getting fast beyond our reach. If there be conviction, let there be action. It is not enough to say to these friendless ones—“depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled.” Such barren pity as

this can only bring us under the fearful condemnation against which the same apostle warns the rich :—" Your gold and your silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire ; ye have heaped together treasure for the last days." Reader, this sentence is from the great Judge himself ; James was his servant to warn us. While time and opportunity is ours, let us get rid of such overwhelming evidence. Let not the gold and the silver be suffered to rust—make them grow bright by circulation ; let the fingers of these neglected children who are now training to pick and to steal, be employed in rubbing off the rust which, if allowed to accumulate, may "eat our flesh as fire." Let us endeavor to turn these little tongues that are now uttering sentences that cannot be published, into witness, that we have tried to do our duty towards them, lest we be doomed to hear their just reproaches for ever. He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he repay him. Capitalists, what think you of such an investment ? The stock of many of the schemes that have been puffed into existence are now selling at a ruinous discount—this will stand above par for ever. It needs neither puffing excitement nor grand celebration to keep up its credit, but rests securely on the promise and the testimony of a good conscience. Ye restless repealers who are now agitating the repeal of the Usury Laws that you may make money with both hands, by making poverty and misfortune pay a double tax, would you not lend a hand for the enactment of laws which shall provide for the bringing up of poor children in habits of industry, whom if you persist in neglecting may be made the instrument of your chastisement, and rob you of the toil of years ? The Quaker gave a proper illustration of true sympathy when he said—" friend I pity thee this much"—putting a gold piece into the hand of the sufferer. And the five or six of the " thirty" who have expressed

their willingness to subscribe for the establishment of a Juvenile Reformatory evince a correct appreciation of their duty, however mistaken they may have been as to the best mode of discharging it. Doubtless it belongs to Government to take action in the matter ; but it is both the right and the duty of every citizen to urge it upon the Government. Then the question comes up, what are we to urge ? It is agreed that legislation is necessary, that a Reformatory is needed, and that the children who would otherwise become pests to society, should be sent there ; but this is not all—the questions still remain to be considered :—Where should the Reformatory be located ? What should be its character and discipline ? At what age should children be received into it. At what age and under what circumstances should they leave it ? What the quality and extent of education to be provided, and the nature of the employment by which we shall qualify them for a life of industry and virtue ? These are points upon which men's minds may differ ; and without presuming to dogmatize, I shall freely express my opinion. As to the locality of the Reformatory, I would say, by all means, it should be at some little distance from the city, so that former acquaintances or friends who were not allowed to visit, might not find it convenient to lounge about its vicinity ; and, that boys sent there against their will might not find it easy to fly from those in charge to join their old companions, nor find means of concealment that would create continued trouble and expense, affecting very much the success of the undertaking. I should say that one of the large islands in the river, ten or fifteen miles from the city would offer many advantages for carrying out the objects of such an institution. The character and discipline of the Reformatory should partake as much as possible of the character and discipline of a large family in which the intelligent parent studies the natural disposition and capacity of each child, adopting his treat-

ment accordingly. The rod should enforce only what obstinacy refused, and what kindness failed to effect. Minor modes of punishment to enforce obedience might also be resorted to, that the rod might be reserved for grave occasions. But never allow any industrial employment to be made a means of punishment, by which the dignity of labour might be lowered, or the boy acquire a distaste for his work. Punishment, by giving a double quantity of work, could scarcely fail to produce this effect, while it would make the boy deceitful—trying to evade the penalty, by executing his work in a slovenly manner. Every thing calculated to identify industry with punishment should be avoided. Labor should be spoken about and gone about as a thing at once dignified and honorable ; and anything savoring of a prison, either in the construction of the building, or the discipline maintained in it, should be avoided. Give it rather the character of a home where privileges are enjoyed, than of a prison or penitentiary, the taint of which will remain for life. As regards the age at which children should be sent to the institution, I think it should depend upon circumstances, which might also decide whether a child should be sent there at all. None should be sent till they were able to run about—say at the age of three or four years. A distinction should be made by the persons in charge between those who had been tainted by bad example, or actual commission of crime, and those who had not ; but this fact should not be made known to the children. Children might be sent there until they reach the age of fifteen or sixteen years. Circumstances might however arise, that would render it improper to adhere to rigid arrangements in this respect. Learning in the institution would also be in a great measure regulated by circumstances. The time that suitable employment could be procured would generally determine this point. The principal difficulty would be to place them in such employment that the benefits they

derived in the institution would not be lost again, by exposing them to the influence of evil example. The education to be provided for these children should be carefully adapted to aid them in whatever branch of industry they were to be taught, as a means of earning a livelihood ; but the young mind should not be starved, and when there was an eagerness manifested for learning it should be rather encouraged. But to whatever extent learning was bestowed, religion should be the basis of the whole. Education not based upon religion puts a weapon into a man's hand that may be employed for evil or for good. Religion alone can change the heart, and make learning a blessing to himself and to society. Let system and good order rule, dividing the day or the week into regular periods—so many hours for work, so many in the school-room, and so many for religious instruction, and so many for recreation, in which gymnastics or military discipline might be made alike conducive to health and amusement. In giving religious instruction, let the clergy of different denominations have access to the children belonging to them for that purpose, but let not the institution as such, have any denominational character. As regards the kinds of industry to be taught, there are many opinions ; and I think the prevailing one is,—that many of the mechanical branches should be introduced and taught in the Reformatory. My own opinion is opposed to this. I think there are many and strong reasons for making the Reformatory an *Agricultural School*. I have already shown that one reason why gaols are hot-beds of vice, is because the filth of society is swept into them, and the larger the fermenting heap the more rapid the fermentation. And it is for this reason that crime is developed to a degree in large cities that would scarcely be believed in rural districts. Teach boys mechanical arts, and they will naturally turn into large cities on leaving the institution, where they will be exposed to temptations unknown in the country parts, and

will be without the wholesome check which the eye of virtuous parents can exercise over their children in like circumstances; and besides this such boys would be subjected to the taunts of young shop-mates who had acquired their trade by a regular apprenticeship. But a still stronger reason is found in the manifest injustice that would be done to the industrious poor who would be taxed to maintain such an establishment, if the children of bad parents were better provided for than they could provide for their own. I would say beware of offering a premium to vice. Give the little thieves and children of vagrants and prostitutes greater advantages than the children of hard-working honest men can obtain, and we shall not be able to build Reformatories so fast as they shall be needed. We should defeat our object by the means employed for its accomplishment. Canada is essentially an agricultural country, and will continue so for years, for her resources in this respect are almost inexhaustible; the demand for skilful farm labor is increasing year after year, and so is the remuneration for such labour. Make the Reformatory an agricultural school and model farm. The boy will leave such an institution to go in quest of employment not to the large towns where crime is rampant, but to the rural district where temptation is unknown; a few years of industry will enable him to possess a farm of his own. This will not be a premium to vice—it will do no injustice to any class of the community; and it will not only save from untold misery and degradation, but will confer lasting benefits upon many a helpless juvenile.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant,

PHILANTHROPY.

LETTER VII.

To the Editor of the Montreal Gazette.

Sir,—“The Speech from the Throne,” delivered by His Excellency the Governor General at the opening of the present Parliament, will doubtless prove highly gratifying to the thousands and tens of thousands throughout Canada who, regardless of party predilections, can rejoice in measures of needful reform. Interested parties will, as a matter of course, fix upon particular points in His Excellency’s Speech for praise or animadversion as their interests may seem to be affected, and the rulers of a people generally seize upon great party measures and give them prominence in the Royal Speech, that party support may be secured. But when before have that wretched, helpless class, juvenile delinquents, found such an advocate to plead their cause? When before have this class—powerless as they are for party or political purposes—had their claims so prominently recognised, and so strongly and so feelingly urged upon the Councils of a nation as they have been by His Excellency on the present occasion? The strong have many friends, but the weak cry long unheard. Factionists will see little to admire in making the improvement of our prisons and the separation of the mere youth from the hardened offender, questions of state policy; and even good men who from their position cannot correctly estimate the importance or necessity of such measures, may be induced to think that too much prominence has been given to them on the present occasion. Man at best is selfish, and those who croak loudest against the importance given to prison improvement and the separation of juveniles from old offenders by the present Government, would croak as loud on the opposite side if they themselves became interested parties. And let it be remembered that there is no member of the community can say—“I

shall never be personally affected by such a measure. How often have I witnessed the feelings of indignation and dismay striving together in the breast of a highly respectable parent, on coming into the gaol to make arrangements for the care and comfort of a wayward son who had been committed a few hours before on suspicion of some crime, and finding that his boy was shut up in a ward with some dozen or two of all grades of criminals? The tone and manner of the gentleman would give way to those of an outraged bully, as he indignantly reproved the officer in charge for his cruelty and injustice in placing his dear boy in the same ward with the most hardened and depraved. In vain would the gaoler assure him that he had no means at his disposal to act otherwise. The feelings of the parent could not be pacified by such an excuse. The outrage was too strong—the very idea was maddening, and as if to revenge what could not be prevented, the sense of injury would find vent in large denunciations against the Government and all its subordinates. Still more painful to witness the emotion of the virtuous mother whose daughter (perhaps her only one) had been sent to gaol. “Oh sir, you will keep my daughter away from bad characters, she is very young and I am sure she is innocent. Oh, say you will, she is my daughter.” “Madam, I can sympathise with your very proper feelings, and would if it were in my power keep your daughter from contamination, while she is so unfortunate as to be in my custody, if that were possible; but”—“Oh sir, do not tell me you will not! Name any sum and you shall have it, if I should sell my all to make it up—only say you will not put my poor child among bad women.” “Alas, madam, except I were to build a room for your daughter, I have no means of complying with your wishes, and truth obliges me to say that the untried female ward contains women of the most abandoned character.” Surely, if the members of the Legislature could witness such scenes as I

have faintly depicted, and they are not of rare occurrence, they would for once lay aside all opposition, they would meet the Government in the spirit of justice and true philanthropy, and they would secure to Canada gaols in which the youth who unfortunately enters need not as a necessary consequence lose his health through the effects of bad ventilation, and lose every remaining sense of virtue by contact with persons whose very breath is infectious. And they would lay the foundations of an institution or institutions that would save from ruin the destitute and fatherless child, and save the Province from the ravages of bands of desperadoes trained up from youth in lessons of vice, and annually maturing themselves for deeds of greater daring. Need I say again and again that such Juvenile Reformatories would in effect save the Province many thousands annually. Why is it then that this important subject, second in importance surely to none that can come before this or any other Legislature, meets such a feeble response from the press of the Province? Can it be that the press has neither heart nor ear for any thing that does not tell upon some opposing party in politics? Our Governor and his advisers in giving such prominence to the claims of juveniles and the improvement of our prisons, in the Royal Speech, have evinced a courageous magnanimity which, however little it may be appreciated or severely censured by mere party men, will, if faithfully carried out, do more for the true interests of Canada than has been done by any one Session of the Legislature since the union of the Provinces.

The question of providing a suitable abode and proper training for our destitute juveniles and for children who are even worse than destitute, viz: children living with depraved parents, is now fairly before the country; and the object which "Philanthropy" had in view on taking up his pen, would seem to be attained. Only let Government and people unite in an earnest endeavor to make our prisons what they should be,

and add to our other institutions a monument of our wisdom and philanthropy by founding juvenile reformatories in such sections of the Province as may be found most suitable, and let those upon whom the responsibility rests of framing laws and arranging principles for the founding and management of such institutions see that their praiseworthy efforts be not thwarted by designing men or mere place-hunters. Let the principle enunciated in His Excellency's speech, viz : "admission to the public offices shall depend on competence, tested by impartial examination, rather than on favor or regard for individuals"—let, I say, this principle be honestly applied to the question under consideration, and the cavillers of the present day will become the friends and admirers of the institutions which shall spring up out of the measures now recommended to the attentive consideration of our Parliament.

A rare opportunity now presents itself to the members of the Legislature for winning for themselves a name that shall live in the memory of a grateful people after the fame of the mere champion of party politics shall have been forgotten or despised. Who shall lead the van and win the prize? Who shall be foremost in laying the foundation stone of an institution that shall snatch from the path of crime and the haunts of vice the children of shame and misfortune, and train them up to become useful and valuable citizens? Yours will be the reward of a conscience approving your conduct—the highest reward a man can possess in his life; and as the full benefits of the Juvenile Reformatory begin to be felt, you will have the thanks of a whole people; and when the juveniles saved from the worst species of destruction grow up to experience and appreciate the blessings enjoyed by them, you will have their lasting gratitude.

Members of Parliament, let not the golden opportunity pass;—raise your voice in behalf of the juven-

ile delinquent; —help the helpless, and earn for yourselves the testimony of an approving conscience, and a just title to the character of—

PHILANTHROPY.

MAR 3/28

